



PRESS RELEASE

Mobilization of communities to increase population awareness on HIV prevention in Uzbekistan



At the orientation meeting discussing joint plan of action on increasing level of population awareness on HIV prevention

The raising HIV epidemic in Uzbekistan is featured with the traditional hostility of the general population towards drug users and sex workers combined with poor HIV awareness, especially among vulnerable groups that represent the main drivers of the epidemic. Special efforts are required to increase population awareness and address HIV stigma and discrimination issue. The national “Strategic Program on response to HIV-infection prevalence in Uzbekistan for 2007-2011” considers wide involvement of civil society as one of the ways to address that topic.

USAID funded CAPACITY project discovered an effective way of achieving this goal in Uzbekistan by working with Mahallas. Mahallia represents the administrative, territorial and social unit established on the base of traditional communities throughout the

country. Mahalla leaders have significant influence on the community members and with 10 000 Mahallias throughout the country it is the best way to reach whole population with HIV messages.

The USAID-funded CAPACITY Project assisted national partners to design a training module for Mahalla leaders on HIV prevention and stigma and discrimination reduction towards vulnerable groups. To sustain the initiative CAPACITY project supported development of a joint plan of action with key stakeholders including “Health 2” Project/World Bank, Republican Fund Mahalla, Institute of Health/MOH. The first activity of the plan is going to be a baseline assessment of population knowledge and attitude on HIV issues. The data will help further to prove effectiveness of Mahallia leaders’ efforts in increasing awareness of population on HIV and decreasing stigma and discrimination towards vulnerable groups.